

Town of Drakes Branch Visioning Session Report

July 2017



Drakes Branch Visioning



Introduction

This process began with sparkplugs in the community who were seeking funding for downtown improvements working together with Town officials to seek funding solutions. In October of 2016, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) notified the Town of Drakes Branch that it was eligible to receive an Economic Assessment Pre-Project Planning Grant followed by a Business Revitalization District (BDR) planning grant. The objective of the two planning grants is to pursue a Community Development Block Grant BDR Competitive Construction Grant possibly in the spring of 2018. The Town established a Project Management Team to oversee the process.



On June 27th & 28th, 2017 DHCD facilitated Visioning Sessions for the Town of Drakes Branch with the assistance of staff from the Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC). The purpose of the Visioning Sessions is for the community to develop a vision for its future through an active, broad-based citizen participation process.

Both sessions lasted 2 hours each and included 17 participants the first night and 23 participants the second night, not including DHCD and CRC staff. The Town served refreshments both nights. Participants represented local government, citizens, business owners, the volunteer fire department, news media and property owners. The majority of the participants have lived in the Town for more than 20 years.

Day One, June 27th - Activities

Participants:

Rodney Moon
Karen Gregory-Williams
Todd Fortune
Melody Foster
Denise Pridgen
Mary Follett
Kurt Aiken
Roscoe Eubanks
Kenny Tharpe
Derrick Thompson
James Napier



Drakes Branch Visioning



Italia Gregory
James D. Gregory
Jerris Wells
Charles Smith
James K. Gregory
Julia Hamlett
Garland Hamlett
Deborah Kennedy
Elizabeth Boehringer
Ramona Chapman



The Visioning Session began with a Welcome from the Town's Mayor, Denise Pridgen and background information on the project provided by Melody Foster, Acting Executive Director of the Commonwealth Regional Council. Ms. Foster stated the Visioning Sessions were well promoted by Flyers being located in several key locations across the Town, as well as provided to local churches and all business owners. The Sessions were promoted also by advertising in the local newspaper and the Town's website. Local civic organizations also supplied the information to their participants. The local newspaper also printed an article on the upcoming Sessions to bring awareness and help spread the word.

Melody Foster introduced Elizabeth Boehringer, Community Development Specialist and Ramona Chapman, Capacity Development Specialist with DHCD who facilitated the Visioning Session.

Ms. Boehringer noted that typically the type of project the Town is undertaking takes two years of planning. The Town however, will attempt to complete this process in one year. It can be done but will require critical community support.

The initial visioning session focused on a review of Drakes Branch's past, and an assessment of the current state of the downtown area. Participants were actively engaged in an exercise to draw a map of their perception of the current downtown area. This map will be used in a walking tour that will occur on the second day of the Visioning process.

Participants were then asked to share the Town's Past by answering the following questions:

- **Why is there a town at Drakes Branch? What caused people to settle here?**
 - The Rail Road had a stop at the Drakes family farm which had a spring where one could get water.



Drakes Branch Visioning



- At one time, Drakes Branch was a booming town. It had:
 - ✓ Doctor's office
 - ✓ Pharmacy
 - ✓ Liquor store
 - ✓ 8 grocers
 - ✓ Dry cleaners
 - ✓ Movie theater
 - ✓ Bowling alley
 - ✓ Pickle factory
 - ✓ Textile mills
 - ✓ The world's largest dark tobacco market

- What are the significant events in the downtown's history? When was the town's greatest prosperity? What contributed to its decline?
 - ✗ The earliest prosperity occurred in the early 1900's.
 - ✗ The railroad had frequent stops in the Town for economic activity.
 - ✗ There was some decline during the Depression.
 - ✗ A flood occurred in 1940. The railroad tracks were washed out, which led to a train wreck. The railroad paid to put things back together.
 - ✗ The railroad quit stopping in the Town.
 - ✗ The town's only unsolved murder occurred in December 1963 when the town's doctor was murdered.
 - ✗ The textile mills arrived in 1949.
 - ✗ The textile mills closed down in 2005.
 - ✗ The Rail Road took up the tracks and the Tobacco Market closed.
 - ✗ During the town's heyday there were so many people downtown there were no available parking spaces.

- What can we celebrate about the downtown's history?
 - ✓ The town had a town hall and local police
 - ✓ There was a popular annual Drakes' Day. Drakes Branch's Main Street was blocked off from 9 am to 12 midnight. The event was scaled down until it was hit or miss.
 - ✓ Dance hall

- What contributed to the downtown's decline?
 - ✗ Tobacco left
 - ✗ The railroad left

Drakes Branch Visioning



- ✘ The local school was closed
- ✘ The Doctor's office, Pharmacy and 8 grocers left
- ✘ People moved away so they could find jobs

- What part of the downtown's past must be included in its future?
 - Doctor's office
 - Pharmacist
 - Grocer

P.A.R.K:

Participants discussed the downtown's present situation using the P.A.R.K. exercise, which stands for Preserve, Add, Remove and Keep Out. This exercise is designed to organize creative ideas into sub-categories and is a modified version of S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). Participants were divided into four groups with each table examining one component of P.A.R.K.

Preserve: This group looked at what the downtown had that its competitors don't have. What are our greatest assets and strengths? What is here that would surprise folks?

- ✓ Only Town in the County with a Police department
- ✓ Fire department
- ✓ Water & sewage plant
- ✓ Dance hall
- ✓ Farmer's Market
- ✓ Pavilion
- ✓ Closeness & people; like family; small town feel
- ✓ Preserve museum and town history
- ✓ Faith based; 8 churches
- ✓ 30 years and counting; the longevity of the Smith Auto Sales

There was considerable discussion on the Farmer's Market and what made it a successful:

- ✓ The market is overseen by a non-profit board of directors
- ✓ The Town Council supports the market
- ✓ In developing the market, existing assets were used
- ✓ The number of vendors selling the same item(s) are limited
- ✓ The focus of Friday's market is different from the one held on Saturday
- ✓ The application process is easy; not a lot of red tape



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- ✓ Most vendors are from the county
- ✓ Buyers are following their favorite vendors to the market
- ✓ Friendly, welcoming people
- ✓ It's a social gathering place
- ✓ Good marketing of the market

Add: This group focused on what needs to be added to the downtown. What are positive things that we want? What external conditions haven't been addressed? What external conditions might be helpful in achieving a new future? What needs to be achieved in the next 12 months?

- The downtown needs to attract a doctor, pharmacy, grocery store and clothing store
- It has a gas station and bank but needs more of these for competition
- There is a need for additional affordable housing, including upper story apartments. This is the reason why Keysville does so well
- Additional activities, especially recreational, for children and the elderly
- The downtown's old buildings need to be repaired or torn down to make room for thriving businesses
- It would be helpful in achieving the downtown's new future if the Drakes Main Street was beautified
- We need a variety of incentives to attract new businesses
- The Drakes Day Festival needs to be organized and held again
- More businesses
- Improve sidewalks
- Add internet access (fiber?)



Remove: The group focused on what harmful, negative characteristic(s) need to be removed? How can we overcome them? Who are our competitors? Where are we vulnerable compared to our competitors? What is our economic base?

- ✗ Run down town
- ✗ Remove junk cars/Rowdiness
- ✗ Should be more proactive in enforcing rules and regulations e.g.; loitering and code enforcement
- ✗ Chief competitors are Keysville and Charlotte Court House
- ✗ Lack of per capita participation in comparison to chief competitors (less willing to spend money and be involved)
- ✗ Economic base is service station, bank, hair salon, farm supply store and Dollar General

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- ✘ Vacant and dilapidated buildings, lots

Keep Out: The group focused on what the Town does not have but also wants to keep out? What external conditions/threats are hurting the Town in achieving a new future? What are our competitors doing differently? What economic conditions are affecting our community's financial viability and what can be done to change them?

- ✘ Large chain stores e.g.; Wal-Mart
- ✘ Insufficient street layout (hinders traffic flow)
- ✘ Abandoned cars/junk
- ✘ Low-paying jobs (want jobs with better pay)
- ✘ Strip clubs
- ✘ Certain behaviors e.g.; drugs, vagrants, loitering, junk/salvage visible

Next Steps and Adjournment:

After reviewing the P.A.R.K. flipcharts, Ramona Chapman informed the attendees that the flipcharts developed during the evening would be transcribed and distributed the following evening. Afterwards, she highlighted Day Two events, especially the tour of the historic downtown area. Staff thanked everybody for attending and invited and encouraged everyone to participate in the Day Two events.

Day Two, June 28th – Activities

Participants:

Charles T. Smith
Todd Fortune
James D. Gregory
Deborah Kennedy
Tracey Gregory
Jerris Wells
Eugene Wells
James K. Gregory
Karen Gregory-Williams
Denise Pridgen
Ramona Chapman
Thelma Jones
Derrick Thompson
Kenny Tharpe
Kurt Aiken



Drakes Branch Visioning



Mary Follett
Rodney Moon
James Napier
Janice Wells
Peery A. Wells
Rick Griffith
Garland Hamlett
Julia Hamlett
Elizabeth Boehringer
Phillip Jackson
Brace Mittleman
Melody Foster

Mayor Pridgen welcomed newcomers and former participants back to the Visioning Session. Melody Foster with the Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) provided background information on the project for those who were not in attendance the first night.

Elizabeth Boehringer stated the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the state funding agency, requires communities interested in a downtown construction project, do some planning before submitting their construction application. This includes identifying the downtown's boundaries and looking at what the current situation is in the downtown area. DHCD also requires a community to develop a vision of what it wants the downtown area to look like in 10 years. This vision statement will guide the Town as it develops an application for a construction project, which is due at the end of March each year.

Ms. Boehringer stated the first night's participants reviewed the past, assessed the present and began to think about the future. A summary of the first night's Session was prepared by the CRC and provided to participants. Ms. Boehringer asked everyone present to review the Summary and pass on any additions or corrections to Ms. Foster with the CRC.

Ms. Boehringer asked participants to continue to envision what the future might look like. A visioning statement is like saying "Imagine ten years from now and we have created our most desirable downtown" and this is what it looks like. Ms. Boehringer went over the ground rules for exercises and also added that when blight is mentioned; focus on economic blight and not just physical blight removal. Ms. Boehringer stated that improving the condition of buildings is a concern and DHCD will require that physical blight be addressed. However, removing economic blight through economic restructuring is crucial to a successful downtown project.

What is economic blight? It is those activities which limit the Town's abilities to attract new businesses, residents or tourists. If we want to attract new businesses, we might include in our project providing small business development classes; like how to write a business plan; or providing start-up loans which lead to the

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development of jobs made available to targeted residents. If we want to include in our business mix web-based businesses, we would need to look at whether or not a fiber optics system is needed. (It was noted that the town does have a fiber optics system.) Perhaps we want to add upper-floor apartments? It would also include developing a brand for the town which is how you want to market your downtown. It might include a theme and a logo that is used on local websites, signage, letterhead etc which tells readers what the Town is all about. For example, DHCD's brand is Partners for Better Communities. The Town of Warsaw's brand is "The Heart of the Northern Neck," while the City of Norton's is "Get Outside in Norton, Virginia." They reflect how individual communities see and promote their uniqueness. Many communities develop their own marketing website to assist property owners in marketing their empty buildings. The Town could also post information on the County's website.

Walking Tour of Downtown Drakes Branch: Participants took the maps they drew from the previous night along with them on a walking tour of the downtown area of Drakes Branch. Ramona Chapman facilitated discussions along the tour with participants of the conditions of the buildings and also their current use and potential uses in the future. Gathering places were noted as well as the history of some of the downtown area locations. Several property owners/business owners gave background on the buildings and also shared how they would like to improve their properties. Participants discussed the potential cleanup of the area around the creek that currently runs under the road towards the Pavilion where the Farmer's Market is held. There was also discussion of how this area could potentially be built upon by several supporting businesses whose focus could support the success of the Farmer's Market. One property was noted as being condemned and could be removed to improve the appearance of the downtown area.



Envision the Future – 2027: Ramona Chapman had participants engage in an exercise for envisioning the future of the Town. Participants were asked to close their eyes and imagine they were in the future in the year June 2027. Several national newspapers and magazines such as the New York Times and Time Magazine have notable articles on small towns in America and Drakes Branch is featured. Participants were asked to imagine what the headlines would say about the Town in 2027 and also how did Drakes Branch get on the list to be featured in these articles and headlines. Ideas were written down on cards that were placed on a sticky board for the entire group to review. The following were the Headlines developed by the participants:

- *Booming Town of Drakes Branch Is Very Technology Savvy*
- *Silicon Valley of Southside Virginia*
- *Drakes Branch Filled With Lights*

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- *Drakes Branch Moving Forward in Technology*
- *Drakes Branch Duck Puddle No More*
- *Drakes Branch is Alive*
- *Duck Puddle Booms Again*
- *New Fire Station/Rescue Station and/or Community Building*
- *Drakes Branch Rejuvenated in 2027*
- *Drakes Branch, Virginia The Small Town That Could*
- *Welcome to the Revitalized Community Established in 2027*
- *Drakes Branch is Reborn*
- *New Beginnings in Drakes Branch*
- *Drakes Branch Citizens Find a Dream!*
- *They Dreamed, They Conquered, They Rebuilt a Little Town*
- *Drakes Branch A Great Place to Retire*
- *Drakes Branch A Safe Place to Live*
- *Drakes Branch a New Town with a New Attitude with Lights*
- *A Major Change for Drakes Branch Moving Forward*
- *Drakes Branch Finds a Way!*
- *Drakes Branch Moving on Up*
- *Drakes Branch Ideal Small Country Town to Reside In*
- *Drakes Branch is Moving Forward*
- *Drakes Branch, Va Experiences Major Growth*
- *First Public Playground Opens in Drakes Branch, Virginia*
- *Community Unites to Bring Drakes Branch Back to Life*
- *Drakes Branch, Virginia One of the Top 20 Small Towns to Live In*
- *New Sidewalks, Apartment Buildings*
- *Drakes Branch Largest Movie Theatre*
- *First Brewery Market Place Loft Apartments Captures Heart of Drakes Branch!*
- *New Fire Station, Second Stop Light, Pizza Hut, Subway, Doctors Office, A New Super Market*
- *Lights Camera Action! Hollywood Makes Movie in Drakes Branch*



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- *Drakes Branch a Tourist Attraction*
- *Attractions: Geocaching Sites in Town, Wilson-Kautz Raid Civil War Trail, Birding & Staunton River Loop Wildlife Trail, Drakes Branch Museum Listed in Va's Travel Guide & Va's Retreat Guide*
- *Drakes Branch Great Destination for Dining and Theatre*
- *Welcome to Historic Drakes Branch Founded in 1853*
- *Drakes Branch Lake a Must Visit Vacation Spot – Camping, Nature Trail, Bicycle Trail and Venues for Weddings*
- *Drakes Branch Train Depot Reopens*
- *Drakes Branch Celebrates Family Owned Businesses 40 Years in Business – Smith Auto Sales!*
- *Drake Branch Turns Into a City*
- *Drakes Branch a Service Oriented Community*
- *New Period Lighting and Sidewalks Installed; Old Buildings Demolished; Doctor and Rx Comes to Town; New Restaurant Opens; Bicycle Path Built*
- *Drakes Branch – New Camp David South; American Pride Reopens*
- *Drakes Branch Farmer's Market Expands to 6 Days a Week Draws People From All Over the State*
- *Take Down all Buildings That Can't Be Repaired; New Fire Station; Clean Up Creek, New Taste Freeze*

As the participants reviewed the Headlines similar themes emerged and were grouped into categories of: Rebirth, Tourism, Technology and New Businesses.

How Did We Get Here: The participants were then split into 4 groups to ponder questions on how the community can achieve the headlines developed for the future.

The following questions were answered by each group.

■ **How does the downtown look in 2027?**

- ✓ Cobblestone streets
- ✓ Retro look with modern appeal
- ✓ Clean and fresh
- ✓ Appealing storefronts
- ✓ Inviting, people are stopping and shopping
- ✓ New industry and tourism
- ✓ Old buildings torn down

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- ✓ Creek cleaned up
- ✓ New Fire Department/Community Building
- ✓ Town Hall becomes Mini Market
- ✓ Nice restaurants, bar & grille
- ✓ Liquor by the Drink is passed in Charlotte County
- ✓ Doctors office
- ✓ New patriotism with American flags flying everywhere
- ✓ More downtown parking
- ✓ Bigger Town police department
- ✓ Improved street lights
- ✓ Improved sidewalks
- ✓ Removal of physical blight
- ✓ Underground power lines
- ✓ No empty buildings
- ✓ Small micro business focus
- ✓ Lots of car/foot traffic
- ✓ Affordable housing which is safe, secure and sanitary
- ✓ More outdoor recreation for all residents and tourists
- ✓ Flowers and small trees
- ✓ Colorful buildings occupied
- ✓ Business signs – buildings identifiable



■ What makes it special and unique?

- ✓ A stream runs through it
- ✓ Historic tobacco history
- ✓ Expanding Farmers Market
- ✓ Gift Shop
- ✓ Florist
- ✓ Pharmacy
- ✓ Center of the County – Heart of the County
- ✓ Town lake for public use
- ✓ Expanded Farmers Market



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- ✓ Town Park open
 - ✓ Positive attitude by residents, business owners and property owners
 - ✓ Friendly people
 - ✓ Safe community
 - ✓ Many places to socialize
 - ✓ Ducks Puddle IPA
 - ✓ Services for elderly apartment residents
 - ✓ Gift shop
 - ✓ Locally owned businesses
 - ✓ Pedestrian/Bike trail
 - ✓ Meet needs of town residents with business hours of operation
 - ✓ Craft shows
 - ✓ Activities for the elderly
 - ✓ Nice restaurants
 - ✓ Medical facilities
 - ✓ Something for children
 - ✓ Community and family events — movie night
-
- **How did the community achieve it?**
 - ✓ Collectively worked together, changed Town motto from “we can’t” to “let’s do it!”
 - ✓ New town ordinance and compliances
 - ✓ Grant money abundant
 - ✓ Donations or in-kind services
 - ✓ Improved streets and sidewalks
 - ✓ Community support
 - ✓ Cheaper rent
 - ✓ Go Fund Me Campaign
 - ✓ Lots of marketing
 - ✓ Everybody pitches in to achieve goals — working together
 - ✓ Positive attitude — belief it could happen
 - ✓ Started in 2016
 - ✓ Restart downtown merchant association

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- ✓ Market Town to prospective businesses
- **What were the hardest issues to overcome?**
 - ✗ Money \$\$\$
 - ✗ Town Pride
 - ✗ Cared about appearance of Town
 - ✗ Garner community participation
 - ✗ Getting business owners on board with the project
 - ✗ Competition with other parts of the county
 - ✗ Getting Town to condemn buildings
 - ✗ Prioritizing goals
 - ✗ Overcoming negative discouraged attitudes of “it will never happen” nay-sayers
 - ✗ Getting donations
 - ✗ Grant application — getting project funded
 - ✗ Getting young people involved
 - ✗ Internet/cell access
 - ✗ Attracting people to the community
- **What local resources available in 2017 did you use, and what new resources/skills did you need to achieve your vision?**
 - ✓ Department of Housing and Community Development
 - ✓ Commonwealth Regional Council
 - ✓ Tobacco Commission
 - ✓ Continued community participation
 - ✓ Local Funds
 - ✓ Management Team
 - ✓ Town Council
 - ✓ Advertising
 - ✓ Charlotte County
 - ✓ Politicians
 - ✓ VDOT
 - ✓ Department of Agriculture
 - ✓ Virginia Tourism Corporation



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- ✓ Town staff — clerk, zoning, police, etc.
 - ✓ USDA
 - ✓ Town's website
 - ✓ Town's FB page
 - ✓ Ease of access to highways (Rt. 47 leads to US 360 & 460 which leads to I 81 & 85)
 - ✓ Backup water supply
 - ✓ Town has water and sewer
 - ✓ Outdoor activities available
 - ✓ Public donations
 - ✓ Newspaper
 - ✓ Available space
 - ✓ Charlotte County Industrial Park Authority
 - ✓ Local leaders
 - ✓ New residents
-
- **What key words, pictures, or graphics should we consider using as we work on the branding/marketing part of the Drakes Branch Economic Restructuring Strategy?**
 - ✓ "A rich past but with an eye on the future"
 - ✓ Jump in Ducks Puddle
 - ✓ Farmers Market
 - ✓ Spark plug that drives economic engine of Charlotte County
 - ✓ Ducks Puddle
 - ✓ Build around the theme of the Creek in Town
 - ✓ Patriotism
 - ✓ Pride in Community (No littering)
 - ✓ Graphic — Creek cleaned up and flowing under road leading to Farmer's Market
 - ✓ Small town charm
 - ✓ Heart of county — localized center
 - ✓ Historic character
 - ✓ Attracting businesses, tourists, residents by building upon local fishing/hunting activities
 - ✓ Reboot
 - ✓ Train Depot

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- ✓ Friendly people
- ✓ Safe environment
- ✓ History – Museum
- ✓ Ice Cream/Coffee Shop
- ✓ Fast Food Restaurant

What's Next and Adjournment: Ramona Chapman thanked everyone for participating in the Visioning Sessions. Ms. Chapman stated all of the information provided will assist the Project Management Team in developing a Vision Statement for the project moving forward.

Elizabeth Boehringer stated the Town did a good job of getting the word out about the Visioning Sessions by posting Flyers at the Town Post Office, Dollar General, Town Hall, and delivering flyers to businesses. Articles as well as notices were also posted in the Charlotte Gazette as well as provided to local churches for announcements. The notice was also posted on the Town's website.

Elizabeth Boehringer stated notices of the availability of the final Visioning Summary Report will be provided in the Town residents' water bill once it has been reviewed by the Project Management Team. A Final copy of the Report will be posted on the Town's website and hard copies will be available at the Town office.

Elizabeth Boehringer urged participants to attend Project Management Team meetings to listen to the discussions. Ms. Boehringer stated DHCD scores competitive construction applications more strongly when there is documented community support. This means residents should *attend* community and public meetings on the project when they occur, *sign-in* (so DHCD can see how many residents attended as opposed to town and CRC staff), and most importantly for the community to *voice* their support of the project at meetings (so DHCD can see in the minutes the project is community driven). Ms. Boehringer thanked everybody for attending and the Visioning Session was concluded.

July 13, 2017 Management Team Meeting, Creation of the Vision Statement

The Drakes Branch Management Team met on July 13, 2017 and was tasked with utilizing the information from the Visioning Session to create a Vision Statement.

Management Team Members present included: Melody Foster, Elizabeth Boehringer, Mary Sands, Denise Pridgen, Rodney Moon, Kenny Tharpe, Sherry Tharpe, Thelma Jones and Charles Smith.

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The Team Members were guided by Elizabeth Boehringer in an Exercise to Draft the Vision Language by focusing on key themes from the Vision Session including: unique or leading assets of the community, key values and character of the community.

Themes discussed included:

- ✓ Town located in the heart of the county
- ✓ Outdoor recreation including fishermen traveling through the town to reach Buggs Island Lake
- ✓ Twitty's Creek located throughout the Town
- ✓ Historic heritage related to tobacco, textile mills and the R.R.
- ✓ The Farmer's Market and its success in the Town
- ✓ Dance Hall success
- ✓ Small Town Charm
- ✓ Everyone knows everyone
- ✓ Family oriented
- ✓ Friendly people
- ✓ Unique history
- ✓ Safe community
- ✓ Community of Faith
- ✓ Best water & sewer system in the County



Elizabeth Boehringer continued the exercise with the focus now on the future; kinds of businesses that will help create this downtown identity and who will the community appeal to?

Themes discussed included:

- ✓ Meat/Butcher Shop
- ✓ Wine Tastings/Brewery
- ✓ Restaurants
- ✓ Tourist Information
- ✓ Taste Freezer (fast food for travelers and locals)
- ✓ Sporting Good Store to support travelers going to Buggs Island Lake
- ✓ Eclectic shops supporting Farmer's Market
- ✓ Pop Up Food Vendors
- ✓ More Gas Stations

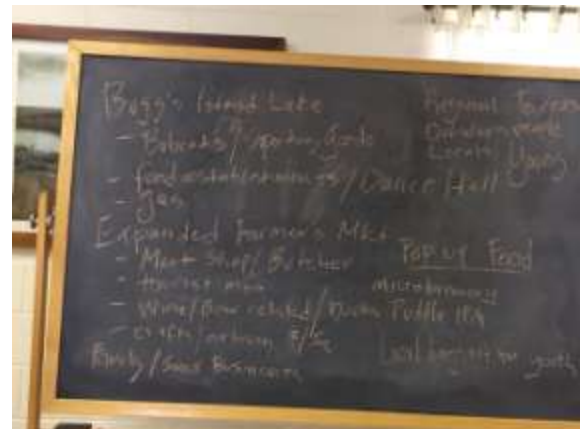
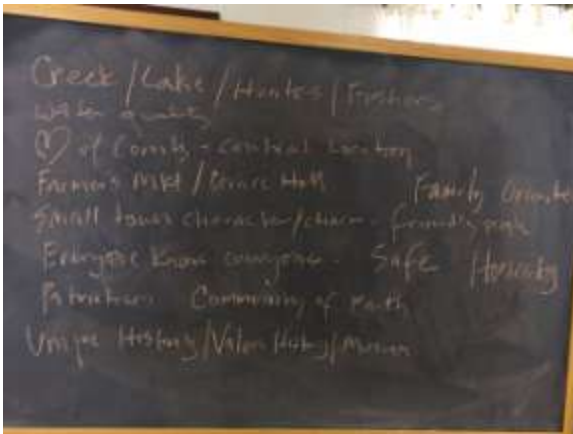
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- ✓ Crafts/Artesian
- ✓ Local hangout for Young People
- ✓ Small Businesses

Team members focusing on the key words identified, worked together to word smith the following **Vision Statement:**

Ducks Puddle Booms Again! Drakes Branch is located in the heart of Charlotte County in beautiful Southside, Virginia. Drakes Branch has the small town charm where everyone knows everyone. Stop by for our outdoor recreation, eclectic shops, local museum and music at the Dance Hall. Visit your friends and neighbors and pick up local produce at the Regional Farmers Market. If you can't buy it in Drakes Branch, you don't need it!



Drakes Branch Visioning



Attachment 1 Display Advertisement

Plan To Attend The Visioning Sessions For The Drakes Branch Downtown Revitalization Project To Be Held On June 27TH AND June 28th

Drakes Branch residents, business owners, and other interested parties, come be a part of two Visioning Sessions that will help develop a plan for the future of Downtown Drakes Branch. The Sessions will be held on **Tuesday, June 27th, and Wednesday, June 28th**, from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at the Drakes Branch Town Hall, located on Main Street in Drakes Branch (light refreshments will be provided).

These Sessions are a very important step in developing a vision and unified strategy for the Town of Drakes Branch as it works to revitalize downtown. The vision developed at these sessions will serve as a guide for future revitalization activities in Downtown Drakes Branch. Your involvement in this early stage of the process is vital to the success of the Town's revitalization efforts. Come help put the pieces together to design a vision for a downtown that flourishes and attracts new businesses!



Anyone who would like more information is encouraged to contact the CRC at (434) 392-6104.

Drakes Branch Visioning



Attachment 2 Flyer for Visioning Session

DRAKES BRANCH DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PROJECT VISIONING SESSIONS

Drakes Branch residents, business owners, and other interested parties, are invited to attend two Visioning Sessions that will help develop a vision for the future of Downtown Drakes Branch. The Sessions will be held on **Tuesday, June 27th, and Wednesday, June 28th from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.** at the Drakes Branch Town Hall, located on Main Street in Drakes Branch.



These sessions are a very important step in developing a vision and unified strategy for the Town of Drakes Branch as it works to revitalize its downtown. The vision developed at these sessions will serve as a guide for future revitalization activities in Downtown Drakes Branch. Your involvement in this early stage of the process is vital to the success of the Town's revitalization efforts.

Staff from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (VDHCD) will facilitate the session, and staff from the Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) will be present to assist with the process.

Anyone who would like more information is encouraged to contact the CRC at (434) 392-6104.

Don't Miss this Opportunity to Help shape the future of Drakes Branch!!!

Refreshments will be provided

Refreshments
June 27th & June 28th

Drakes Branch Visioning



Attachment 3 Sign In Sheets

Locality: Drakes Branch
Grant Number: 16-PG-16
Date:

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Department of Housing and Community Development
PLEASE PRINT YOUR INFORMATION

6-27-17

FULL NAME	TITLE/ORGANIZATION	GRANT ROLE: In Engr, Bldg Insp, Finance Mgr, Etc	MAILING ADDRESS	CITY/TOWN	ZIP	TELEPHONE	FAX	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Serris Wells			4111 Drakes Branch	Drakes Branch	23947	434-568-3192		wells1947@gmail.com
Ashley T. Smith			1239 Main Street	Drakes Branch	23937	703-568-5041 / 434-568-3241		ashley@smithllc.com
James R. Gregory			4000 Drakes Branch	Drakes Branch	23937	434-568-8297		
Julia Hamlett			PO Box 1	Drakes Branch	23937	434-568-445		orewite@hotmail.com
Shelton H. Hester	Drakes Branch		PO Box 363	Drakes Branch	23937	434-568-665		hester@hesterinc.com
Deborah T. Kennedy	Drakes Branch		PO Box 106	Drakes Branch	23937	434-345-0301		lucyandcathy@yahoo.com
Kurt Aiken	American Pride			Drakes Branch	23937			K.Aiken@johncor.com
Elizabeth Boehinger	DHC							
Rosanne Chapman	DHC							

Locality: Town of Drakes Branch
Grant Number: 16-PG-16
Date:

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Department of Housing and Community Development
Visioning Session Sign-in Sheet

6-27-17

FULL NAME	TITLE/ORGANIZATION	GRANT ROLE: In Engr, Bldg Insp, Finance Mgr, Etc	MAILING ADDRESS	CITY/TOWN	ZIP	TELEPHONE	FAX	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Elizabeth Boehinger	DHC/PAAD	Community Development Specialist	Main Street Centre, 600 E Main St, Suite 300	Richmond, VA	23219-4230	804-371-7065	804-371-7003	elizabeth.boehinger@dhcd.virginia.gov
RODNEY MOON	Building owner		GISHAMON RD 444	SALE	23967	434-470-0897		RODNEYMOON@JANORAuto.com
Rosanne Chapman	Building owner	Management Firm		Drakes Branch				
Isabel Fontana	CRC		Thompson/Goodland Building					
Melody Foster	CRC	Acting Co-Director						
Debbie Paulsen	Town of DB	Mayor	PO Box 24 Drakes Branch	Drakes Branch	23937	434-568-1100		
MARY FALLS	American Pride		158 Harpster Ave SALE, VA 23967	SALE	23967	951-581-0026		aikenkurt@yahoo.com
Rosanne Chapman	Town	Mayor	PO Box 24	Town				
Kenny Sharpe	Fire Chief		676 Crafton's Gate Drakes Branch, VA	D.B.	23937	434-568-4944		kennysharpe@drakesbranchva.com
Derrick Thompson	Fire Chief		PO Box 12 2425 West Hill SALE, VA 23967	D.B.	23937			
James Moore	Building owner		2425 West Hill SALE, VA 23967	D.B.	23937	434-568-3044		Jamesmoore@moore.com
Halina Gregory	Charlotte Gazette		Drakes Branch	D.B.	23937	434-568-3311		HalinaGregory@charlottegazette.com
James Gregory	Citizen		176 Main Street Drakes Branch, VA	D.B.	23937	434-345-3344		jdgregory@drakesbranchva.com

Community Representative: Please complete the following:

TYPE OF GRANT (construction, BDR, sewer, etc.) Economic Assessment Planning Grant

Is this an ARC locality? YES NO

Drakes Branch Visioning



Drakes Branch Visioning Session
Town of Drakes Branch
Tuesday, June 28, 2017

Name	Email Address	What Are You Here Representing (Resident, Local Official, Business Owner, Farmers Market, etc)	Phone	Business Owner YES or NO
Chela T. Smith	chela.smith.76@gmail.com	Business owner	434-568-5861	Yes
Todd Fortune	Tfortune@virginiasustainable.org	CRG		No
James D. Gregory Sr	jdgreg65@yahoo.com	Resident	1124-315-3694	Yes
Deborah T. Kennedy	lucyandlester@yahoo.com	Town council	434-395-8861	No
Tracey Gregory	trayds@yahoo.com	Resident	434-315-1019	No
Jerris Wells		Resident	434-568-3090	No
Eugene Wells	wellse1947@aol.com	Resident	434-568-3090	No
James R. Gregory		Town council	434-547-8257	No
Karen Gregory Miller	Kyregmiller@sc.org	Building owner		
Dorise Ridenour	dorisep2331@a.net	Town	434-547-8291	No
Ramona Chapman	ramona.chapman@thed.virginia.gov	DHCP		



Drakes Branch Visioning Session
Town of Drakes Branch
Tuesday, June 28, 2017

Name	Email Address	What Are You Here Representing (Resident, Local Official, Business Owner, Farmers Market, etc)	Phone	Business Owner YES or NO
Sheila D. Jones	tdjones@aol.com	Resident	434-568-6621	No
Derrick Thomas	thomasderrick@yahoo.com	Resident		No
Kenny Sharpe	kennybtharpe@netmail.com	Fire Chief	434-547-9992	Yes
Kurt Aiken	aikenkurt@yahoo.com	American Pride Fuel	951-581-0626	Yes
Mary Fallett	" "	" "	" "	Yes
RODNEY MOON	Rmoon@JaworRudolfs.com		434-470-0809	YES
JAMES HARRIS	jharris@drakesmail.com	Business owner	434-547-8211	Yes
Tanica Wells	tanica.wells@drakes.com	Resident	434-547-9991	No
Regina Wells	" "	Resident / Town Council	" "	No
Nick Guffitt	Guffitt@drakes.com	Guffitt's Hardware + AC	434-568-2044	Yes

Drakes Branch Visioning



Drakes Branch Visioning Session
Town of Drakes Branch
Tuesday, June 28, 2017

Name	Email Address	What Are You Here Representing (Resident, Local Official, Business Owner, Farmers Market, etc)	Phone	Business Owner YES or NO
Cheryl Hamilton	hamletth@comcast.com	Charlotte, NC Town Resident	434-568-6452	NO
Gillie Cromwell	crewick@hotmail.com	SSWCD Resident	434-568-0451	NO
Elizabeth Borchers	elizabeth.borchers@dhcd.virginia.gov	DHCD	804-371-7065	NO
Phillip Housley	philhousley@comcast.com	res. Resident (computer) business owner	434-568-0599	NO
Erin Smith	erin@clash.net			
Melody Foster		CRC	434-392-6104	NO

Town of Drakes Branch CDBG
Business District Revitalization Planning Grant
Management Team Meeting
Thursday, July 13, 2017
Drakes Branch Town Hall
7:00 p.m.

Sign-in Sheet

Name	Affiliation	Phone #	Mailing Address
Melody Foster	CRC	434-392-6104	P.O. Box 1, Furnace VA 22901
Denise Ridge	Town	434-547-1791	P.O. Box 324, Drakes Branch VA 22933
Mary Sands	Town	434-568-3791	PO Box 191 Drakes Branch, VA
Elizabeth Borchers	DHCD	804-371-7065	600 E. MAIN ST #300 Richmond 23229
Sherry Thorpe	Property Owner	434-391-4086	1780 Tolling Road Drakes Branch VA 22937
Radney Moore	Property Owner	434-470-0807	415 2nd Street Drakes Branch VA 22937
Kenny Thorpe	Property Owner & Fire Chief	434-547-9992	CRC Drakes Branch, VA 22937
Johnnie W. Brown	Town	434-568-6104	P.O. Box 714, Drakes Branch VA 22937
Charles T. Smith	Business Owner	(434) 568-3000	P.O. Box 215 Drakes Branch, VA 22937

Drakes Branch Visioning



Attachment 4 – News Articles

Visioning sessions scheduled

VISIONING: Will discuss downtown revitalization

The Charlotte Gazette, Drakes Branch, Va. — Wednesday, June 21, 2017

By Italia Gregory
The Charlotte Gazette

The Town of Drakes Branch is set to host a two-day visioning session June 27-28 to facilitate a conversation regarding the future of downtown revitalization.

According to the Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC), the sessions "are a very important step in developing a vision and unified strategy for the Town of Drakes Branch as it works to revitalize its downtown."

The vision developed at these sessions "will serve as a guide for future revitalization activities in downtown Drakes Branch. Your involvement in this early stage of the process

is vital to the success of the town's revitalization efforts," CRC officials said.

During the two-day process, staff members from several organizations, such as the CRC and the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), will facilitate and assist in the sessions.

CRC's Acting Executive Director Melody Foster said the agency is looking for a good turnout from the community.

The Drakes Branch Downtown Revitalization Project first kicked off last April when a concerned citizen initially contacted the CRC back last February.

The concern led to a meeting at the Drakes Branch Municipal Building to gauge interest in the project.

During that meeting, DHCD Associate Director of Community Development Policy Tamarah Holmes discussed different funding options available through the agency in key areas, including planning, community and economic development, workforce development training, as well as water and sewer infrastructure.

The town would later receive a \$3,000 pre-planning grant to determine the needs of the town and examine the possibility of a future Business District Revitalization Project from the DHCD.

"The storefronts here in Drakes Branch and the properties on the Main Street are very antiquated," councilman Roscoe Eubanks said last May. "If we get a grant to upgrade the storefronts and properties here in town, that would make them attractive to new businesses."

Refreshments will be provided during the visioning sessions. Residents, business owners and individuals with an interest in the project are urged to attend.

For more information on the sessions, contact the CRC at (434) 392-6104.



The Town of Drakes Branch is set to host a two-day visioning session June 27-28 to discuss the future of downtown revitalization in Drakes Branch.

Drakes Branch Visioning



A FRONT PORCH VIEW

Involvement is crucial

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the Town of Drakes Branch held a two-day visioning session to facilitate a conversation regarding the future of downtown revitalization.

It's my hope members of the Drakes Branch community engaged in a discussion pertaining to the future of its existing businesses and the ever-plaguing question in struggling small towns of how to attract and land more business and economic development.

I agree with what officials with the Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) said in that the sessions "are a very important step in developing a vision and unified strategy for the Town of Drakes Branch as it works to revitalize its downtown."

Even more important, I think, is having buy-in and commitment from existing business owners, those on the Drakes Branch Town Council, and most importantly, those who live and pay taxes in town.

Unity is what it's going to take to revitalize Drakes Branch — there's no question about it. The town, the CRC and the few businesses on Main Street can have all the visioning sessions they want and all the meetings they want, but without involvement and commitment from those who live in Drakes that want to see the town prosper,



Jordan Miles

true and meaningful revitalization won't happen.

Just because the CRC's visioning sessions are winding down doesn't mean it's time for the residents and business owners in Drakes Branch to sit down and wait for something to happen.

Those who want to see the town become a better place to live, work and play should be meeting, brainstorming, organizing and coming together for a common purpose of drawing more businesses into the community, along with more residents.

For those wanting more businesses, better lighting in town, improved sidewalks, more customers and an overall better residential and business environment, involvement and participation is most necessary and shows you care about what's going on.

Jordan Miles is managing editor of *The Charlotte Gazette*. His email address is Jordan.Miles@TheCharlotteGazette.com.

The Charlotte Gazette — Wednesday, June 28, 2017